

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

104th Congress
2nd Session

Vote No. 125

May 22, 1996, 10:56 a.m.
Page S-5467 Temp. Record

BUDGET RESOLUTION/\$7.3 Billion Tax Hike for More EPA Spending

SUBJECT: Senate Concurrent Budget Resolution for fiscal years 1997-2002 . . . S. Con. Res. 57. Domenici motion to table the Kerry amendment No. 3990.

ACTION: MOTION TO TABLE AGREED TO, 55-45

SYNOPSIS: As reported, S. Con. Res. 57, the Concurrent Budget Resolution for fiscal years 1997-2002, will balance the Federal budget in fiscal year (FY) 2002 by slowing the overall rate of growth in spending over the next 6 years to below the rate of growth in revenue collections. The rate of growth in entitlements such as Medicare, Medicaid, the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program, and the Earned Income Credit will be slowed. No changes will be made to the Social Security program, the spending for which will grow from \$348 billion in FY 1996 to \$467 billion in FY 2002. Defense spending will be essentially frozen at its present level.

The Kerry amendment would adjust the functional totals in the resolution to reflect an intention to increase spending on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the National Park Service, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) by a total of \$7.3 billion over 6 years, and to increase tax collections by a commensurate amount to pay for that extra spending.

Following debate, Senator Domenici moved to table the Kerry amendment. Generally, those favoring the motion to table opposed the amendment; those opposing the motion to table favored the amendment.

Those favoring the motion to table contended:

Democrats are free to make any irresponsible proposals they please to increase taxes for more spending, but they are wrong to say that the President's budget for which they just voted (see vote No. 119) would have provided more funding for the Environmental Protection Agency than will this budget resolution. The Clinton budget would have shamelessly gutted spending on the environment. It would have done so while pretending to increase spending in the outyears.

(See other side)

YEAS (55)			NAYS (45)			NOT VOTING (0)	
Republicans (52 or 98%)		Democrats (3 or 6%)	Republicans (1 or 2%)	Democrats (44 or 94%)		Republicans (0)	Democrats (0)
Abraham	Helms	Heflin	Jeffords	Akaka	Inouye		
Ashcroft	Hutchison	Kerrey		Baucus	Johnston		
Bennett	Inhofe	Nunn		Biden	Kennedy		
Bond	Kassebaum			Bingaman	Kerry		
Brown	Kempthorne			Boxer	Kohl		
Burns	Kyl			Bradley	Lautenberg		
Campbell	Lott			Breaux	Leahy		
Chafee	Lugar			Bryan	Levin		
Coats	Mack			Bumpers	Lieberman		
Cochran	McCain			Byrd	Mikulski		
Cohen	McConnell			Conrad	Moseley-Braun		
Coverdell	Murkowski			Daschle	Moynihan		
Craig	Nickles			Dodd	Murray		
D'Amato	Pressler			Dorgan	Pell		
DeWine	Roth			Exon	Pryor		
Dole	Santorum			Feingold	Reid		
Domenici	Shelby			Feinstein	Robb		
Faircloth	Simpson			Ford	Rockefeller		
Frist	Smith			Glenn	Sarbanes		
Gorton	Snowe			Graham	Simon		
Gramm	Specter			Harkin	Wellstone		
Grams	Stevens			Hollings	Wyden		
Grassley	Thomas						
Gregg	Thompson						
Hatch	Thurmond						
Hatfield	Warner						

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

Every year for the next 6 years this Senate budget resolution will provide more for the EPA than the President would have provided under his budget. The very first year, fiscal year 1997, the underlying resolution, as drafted by Senate Republicans, will spend \$400 million more than the President requested. Every Democrat who voted for the President's budget, therefore, voted to cut spending on the environment by \$400 million. For each succeeding year through 2002 Republicans also propose spending more on the environment. Republicans propose to spend \$7.4 billion yearly, for a 6-year total of \$2.6 billion more than the President requested. The President asked for less than \$7.4 billion for each year through FY 2000, and then, in FYs 2001 and 2002, he pretends in his budget documents to ask for greater spending when in reality his actual budget resolution proposal calls for draconian cuts. When the CBO first scored the President's budget, it found that it had an \$84 billion deficit in FY 2002. President Clinton wanted to claim that he had a balanced budget proposal, so he then shuffled the numbers in his resolution to reflect a 10.7-percent cut in discretionary spending (which includes EPA spending) in FY 2001 and an 18.3-percent cut in that spending in FY 2002, which, along with the repeal of his anemic tax credit proposal, gave him \$84 billion in CBO-scored savings. He only made the changes to his overall totals, however; he did not say which specific programs he would cut. Instead, he put a "trigger" in his budget--he added a little line stating that his specific spending proposals for the EPA and other programs represented what he thought the Government should spend in FYs 2001 and 2002 if it somehow managed to come up with another \$84 billion to spend. Thus, the claim that the President proposed greater EPA spending over 6 years, which is based on the specific spending proposals the President made for FYs 2001 and 2002, is blatantly false, because the President's specific proposals have no relation whatsoever to the actual spending levels he has for the EPA in his budget resolution. His specific proposals are fantasy-land numbers based on \$84 billion in non-existent money that he says that he would like a future Congress and a future President to spend.

Some Senators have claimed that the underlying budget resolution will cut funding for Superfund. This claim is false. Full funding will be provided. The resolution notes that this program is clearly broken, because more than half of all the taxpayer dollars spent on the program are used to pay EPA administrative and legal costs rather than to clean up toxic waste sites. The main problem is that no criteria exist for determining what constitutes "clean" and what techniques may be used to clean sites; the EPA, on a case-by-case basis, sets standards and then dictates exactly how each site must be cleaned. The result is endless delays and constant litigation due to shifting EPA requirements. To encourage reform, the Senate budget provides that if Superfund reform legislation becomes law and the now-expired Superfund excise taxes are revived, the Senate resolution will provide an additional \$5.4 billion for Superfund. Our colleagues, in arguing that the Republican budget will provide billions of dollars less than the President's proposed budget, are refusing to count the Republicans assumption that Superfund reform legislation will be enacted. We are puzzled by that assumption. We know that Democrats have been blocking a reauthorization of the Superfund Program, but do they really intend to block for the next 6 years that reauthorization to improve the program and impose \$5.4 billion in taxes on polluters, with that money to be used to clean up toxic waste sites?

The means our colleagues chose to pay for the Kerry amendment was to propose greater tax collections, which they said would come from extending expiring tax provisions or making corporate and business tax reforms. We have absolutely no objection to making corporate and business tax reforms as part of an effort to make the tax system simpler and fairer. However, we greatly object to making reforms as a means of raising money to spend. The total tax burden on Americans is already too high--if taxes are raised in one area because it is determined that certain deductions or credits are unjustified, or because it is determined that an expiring tax should be continued, then other taxes should be cut to relieve the burden on average Americans. If our colleagues want to increase spending on the environment above the amount in this resolution, which is already well above the amount proposed by the President, we will be happy to entertain their suggestions if they propose spending reductions as offsets. In a budget that is going to grow from \$1.6 trillion in spending this year to nearly \$1.9 trillion in spending in FY 2002, our colleagues cannot even come up with \$7 billion over 6 years that they are willing to cut. All we are talking about is a .05 percent cut--five/hundredths of 1 percent yearly.

Frankly, we are not convinced that the way to improve the environment is automatically to spend more money. We would much rather improve the current programs, to make them operate more efficiently and effectively, with less bureaucratic red tape, and to give the States greater flexibility to devise environmental solutions that fit their own particular needs. Further, we are convinced that if we do spend more money on the environment, we should pay for it by cutting less important spending instead of raising taxes. We therefore urge our colleagues to table the Kerry amendment.

Those opposing the motion to table contended:

The American people are mad about taxes, stagnant wages, and government waste. But they are also mad about beaches at which they cannot swim, water they cannot drink, rivers in which they cannot fish, and air that is unsafe to breathe. The American people support greater environmental funding. We are certain that if they could vote, they would support the Kerry amendment, which would add \$7.3 billion in environmental and park funding to this Republican resolution to bring spending levels up to the levels requested by the President. Republicans have proposed deep cuts in environmental spending because they want to give huge tax breaks to their rich corporate friends, many of whom are guilty of polluting the environment. Our colleagues' priorities are wrong. We should instead close corporate loopholes as proposed by the Kerry amendment, and use the money to provide the money that is needed to protect the environment. If our colleagues agree they will join us in voting against the motion to table.

MAY 22, 1996

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